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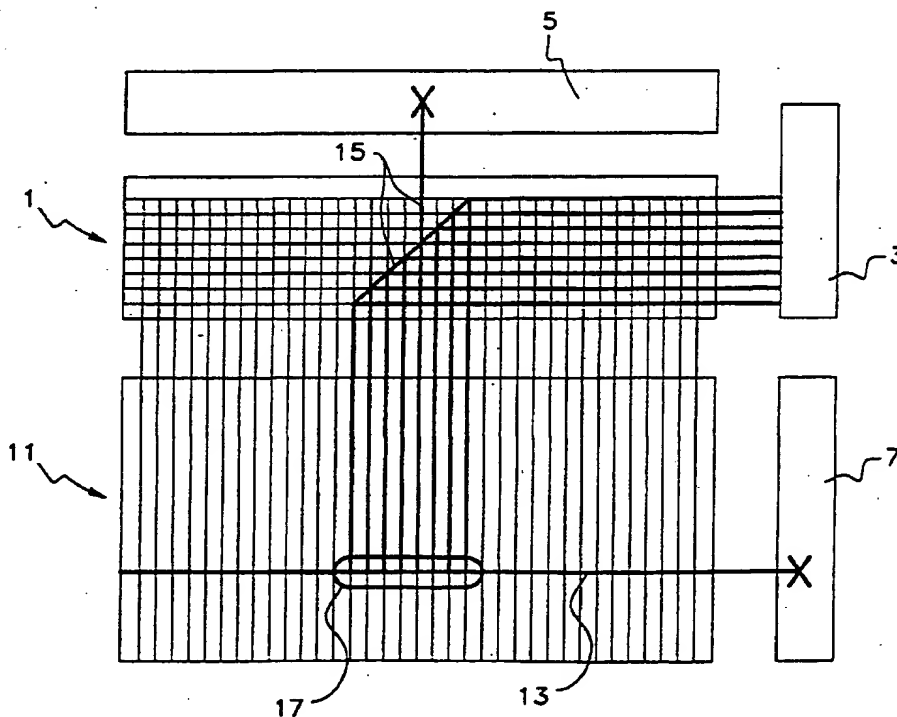
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(54) Title: APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR ADDRESSING CELLS OF INTEREST IN A SOLID STATE SENSOR

(57) Abstract

The addressing and extracting apparatus is for addressing sensing cells of interest in a solid state sensor, and extracting thereof resulting signals. The apparatus comprises a solid state sensor including a plurality of sensing cells, each of the sensing cells having a sensitive unit and a sensing controllable switch having a first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the switch the resulting signal, and a control gate; a selecting line connected to a sensing array of n sensitive units by the control gates of their associated sensing controllable switches; a sensing activating device for activating the selecting line; n sensing data lines for receiving resulting signals of the sensitive units when the selecting line is activated; a parallel analog multiplexer; an extracting activating device for individually activating extracting selecting lines of the parallel analog multiplexer, according to a given sequence; and a controller for controlling and synchronizing operation of the activating devices, whereby, upon activation of the activating devices, the sensing cells of interest are addressed, and the corresponding resulting signals are extracted via extracting data lines of the parallel analog multiplexer.



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APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR ADDRESSING CELLS OF INTEREST IN A SOLID STATE SENSOR

5

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is concerned with an addressing and extracting apparatus for addressing sensing cells of interest in a solid state sensor, and extracting thereof resulting signals, and with a method thereof. This invention relates to solid state image sensing.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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Conventionally, solid state sensors use a simple pixel architecture with a single selection line in one direction and a unique analog data bus on the opposite direction. Thus, when a particular selection line of a conventional sensor is activated, every pixel on the selected line puts its resulting signal on the data bus which is routed out using an extraction module, generally implemented by a shift register. Also, some versions of large image sensors have multiple outputs in order to reduce the time required to extract the entire resulting information from the sensor.

Known in the art, there is the publication entitled "High resolution smart image sensor with integrated parallel analog processing for multi resolution edge extraction", published in Robotics and Autonomous Systems, 11 (1993) 231-242, by Tremblay, M., Laurendeau, D. and Poussart D. In this publication there is described a conceptual and extremely simplified high resolution smart image sensor with integrated parallel analog processing. A drawback with the system described in this publication is that only basic principles are given to the reader and

essential elements are missing so that the reader cannot built an actual operating prototype.

Also known in the art is the US patent no 5,070,414 of Teruo Tsutsumi granted on December 3, 1991. In this
5 patent, there is described a method and apparatus for reading image information formed on material. With this method and apparatus, analog multiplexers are responsive to clock pulses from a timing generator to select output signals from buffer amplifiers in a predetermined
10 sequence, thus producing a serial signal. A drawback with the above described method and apparatus is that the information extracted is only available in a serial signal.

Also known in the art, there are the following us
15 patents 4,541,015; 4,597,012; 4,644,406; 4,985,619; 5,016,108; 5,036,396; 5,051,831; 5,070,414; 5,157,422; 5,253,071; 5,288,988; et 5,317,423. None of the above mentioned patents or publication, described the necessary means allowing parallel extraction of resulting signals
20 from a group of pixels located on a dedicated region of interest.

It is thus an object of the present invention to provide an addressing and extraction architecture for a solid state sensor in order to allow parallel extraction
25 of resulting signals from a group of pixels located on a dedicated region of interest, in a simple and efficient manner.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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According to the present invention, there is provided an addressing and extracting apparatus for addressing sensing cells of interest in a solid state sensor, and extracting thereof resulting signals, the apparatus
35 comprising:

a solid state sensor including a plurality of sensing

cells, each of the sensing cells having:

a sensitive unit for receiving a physical phenomenon and producing a resulting signal representative of an intensity of the physical phenomenon
5 received by the sensitive unit; and

a first sensing controllable switch having a first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the switch the resulting signal, and a
10 control gate;

a first selecting line connected to a first sensing array of n sensitive units by the control gates of their associated first sensing controllable switches;

a first sensing activating means for activating the
15 first selecting line;

n sensing data lines connected respectively to the n sensitive units of the first array by the second terminals of their associated first sensing controllable switches so that, in operation, each of the sensing data lines
20 receives the corresponding resulting signal when the first selecting line is activated;

a first parallel analog multiplexer comprising:

a first bidimensional extracting array of first controllable extracting switches, having a first dimension
25 of n columns by a second dimension of k rows, k being a positive integer representative of the amount of the sensing cells of interest, each of the first controllable extracting switches having a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate, each one of the n sensing
30 data lines being connected to a corresponding one of the n columns of first controllable extracting switches by first terminals thereof;

n first extracting selecting lines each connected to the control gates of a group of the first
35 controllable extracting switches, the first controllable extracting switches of each group forming an axis

transversal to the columns and rows of the first bidimensional extracting array; and

k first extracting data lines each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of first controllable
5 extracting switches by second terminals thereof;

a first extracting activating means for individually activating the first extracting selecting lines, according to a given sequence; and

a controller for controlling and synchronizing
10 operation of the activating means, whereby, upon activation of the activating means, the sensing cells of interest are addressed, and the corresponding resulting signals are extracted via the first extracting data lines.

According to the present invention, there is also
15 provided a method for addressing sensing cells of interest in a solid state sensor, and extracting thereof resulting signals, the method comprising steps of:

(a) receiving a physical phenomenon by means of a solid state sensor including a plurality of sensing cells,
20 each of the sensing cells having:

a sensitive unit for receiving a physical phenomenon and producing a resulting signal representative of an intensity of the physical phenomenon received by the sensitive unit; and

25 a first sensing controllable switch having a first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the switch the resulting signal, and a control gate;

30 (b) providing a first selecting line connected to a first sensing array of n of the sensitive units by the control gates of their associated first sensing controllable switches;

(c) activating the first selecting line;

35 (d) providing n sensing data lines connected respectively to the n sensitive units of the array by the

second terminals of their associated first sensing controllable switches so that, in operation, each of the sensing data lines receives the corresponding resulting signal when the first selecting line is activated;

- 5 (e) providing a first parallel analog multiplexer comprising:

a first bidimensional extracting array of first controllable extracting switches, having a first dimension of n columns by a second dimension of k rows, k being a
10 positive integer representative of the amount of the sensing cells of interest, each of the first controllable extracting switches having a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate, each one of the n sensing data lines being connected to a corresponding one of the
15 n columns of first controllable extracting switches by first terminals thereof;

n first extracting selecting lines each connected to the control gates of a group of the first controllable extracting switches, the first controllable
20 extracting switches of each group forming an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the first bidimensional extracting array; and

k first extracting data lines each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of first controllable
25 extracting switches by second terminals thereof;

(f) individually activating the first extracting selecting lines according to a given sequence; and

(g) controlling and synchronizing operation of steps (c) and (f), whereby, upon activation of steps (c) and
30 (f), the sensing cells of interest are addressed, and the corresponding resulting signals are extracted via the first extracting data lines.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

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Fig. 1 is a conceptual schematic block diagram of an

apparatus according to the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a circuit diagram of a part of the apparatus shown in figure 1;

Fig. 3 is a schematic block diagram of an apparatus
5 according to the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a circuit diagram of a part of the apparatus shown in figure 3;

Fig. 5 is a circuit diagram of a another part of the apparatus shown in figure 3;

10 Fig. 6 is a schematic diagram partially in block and partially in circuit of an embodiment of the apparatus schematically shown in figure 3;

Fig. 7 is a schematic block diagram of another apparatus according to the present invention;

15 Fig. 8 is a schematic diagram partially in block and partially in circuit of an embodiment of the apparatus schematically shown in figure 7;

Fig. 9 is a schematic block diagram of another apparatus according to the present invention;

20 Fig. 10 is a circuit diagram of a part of the apparatus shown in figure 9; and

Fig. 11 is an algorithm illustrating the steps performed by the controller shown in figures 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

25

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present description is in the context of artificial vision but the present invention can be applied
30 to physical phenomena other than the ones in the context of artificial vision. An object of artificial vision is to reconstruct a scene containing explicit and significant objects which can be further recognized and processed. The necessary flow of data constitutes the principal
35 limitation of artificial vision since it exceeds processing capacities of conventional digital systems. In

fact, processing of a single image normally requires the reading and writing of tens of millions of bytes, either into memory or onto an external medium. Such processing may last up to several minutes. Therefore, improvements in artificial vision dictate the development of more effective systems.

The system according to the present invention is called Multiports Array of photo-Receptors system or MAR system. In the following description, we will sometimes refer to MAR system. The MAR system confers a processing power equivalent to several billions of operations per second when coupled to an image processing analog unit or filtering circuit. The MAR system will be described below in a simple manner.

The MAR sensor is a CMOS integrated circuit comprising more than one million transistors. It is specially dedicated to artificial vision. This circuit is normally provided with tens of analog outputs. A data extracting method supported by the architecture performs a data structuring at the outputs of the system so that a direct data processing is already achieved at the output of the MAR system. Consequently, with the MAR system, millions of memory readings and writings which are normally required by a conventional image processing digital system for performing the same task, are not required anymore.

An advantage of the MAR system is that each single data, pixel or picture element of its pixel matrix, which corresponds to the intensity of each point of the image, can be read several times without being destroyed. Most optical sensors available on the market use destructive reading which means that once data is read it cannot be read again. Hence, the MAR system allows multiple readings of each of its pixels.

In fact, when the intensity value of a selected image point or pixel is read, the MAR system provides in

parallel intensity values of the selected pixel with tens of pixels surrounding the selected pixel. All of these pixels are called the pixels of interest. It is then possible to perform image processing or image filtering at the reading instant. Then the image is captured by means of an appropriate module and transferred into a memory. Subsequently, digital vision systems perform numerous memory access in order to obtain information from neighbouring pixels and finally achieve processing of the selected pixel.

Each pixel is selected by sweeping the pixel matrix line by line. For example, 262,144 selections are performed for a sensor having a 512 by 512 pixel matrix. For each selected pixel, the parallel data extraction is realized by the Parallel Analog Multiplexer or PAM. In the following description, we will sometimes refer to PAM. This PAM 1 is illustrated in figure 1. Operating as an intersection manager, it directs data from the selected line 13 of the pixel matrix 11 to the correct outputs 3 of the system.

To move the position of the selected pixel in the pixel matrix 11, shift registers 9 such as the ones shown in figure 2 are used. By referring to figures 1 and 2, the internal shifting structure operation of this type of register will be explained. The activating means 5 and 7 each comprises shift registers 9 as shown in figure 2. The position of the X represents the selected element or the line that is activated. The selected shift register X of the activating means 7 corresponds to a selecting line 13 of the pixel matrix 11. The selected shift register X of the activating means 5 corresponds to the selecting diagonal 15 of the PAM 1.

The operation of the shift registers 9 only allows three simple actions which are no displacement, a displacement of one position to the right, and a displacement of one position to the left. For example, in

order to sweep all of the lines of the pixel matrix 11, one has to perform as many displacements of one position as the number of lines in the matrix 11. This principle is applicable for each of the activating means 5 and 7.

5 When the MAR system is swept, the pixels of interest can be displaced by one pixel horizontally or vertically. In the particular case of figure 1, there are four possible displacements of the pixels of interest. A first possible displacement is a displacement to the left of the
10 pixels of interest 17 by displacing to the left the diagonal 15 selected by activating means 5 and keeping the line 13 selected by the activating means 7 unchanged. The active shift register of the activating means 5 is moved to the left whereas the active shift register of the
15 activating means 7 is maintained. The new pixels of interest which are centred on a new position of the selecting diagonal are then directed to the outputs 3 of the PAM 1.

A second possible displacement is a displacement to
20 the right of the pixels of interest by displacing to the right the diagonal 15 selected by activating means 5 and keeping the line 13 selected by the activating means 7 unchanged. The active shift register of the activating means 5 is moved to the right whereas the active shift
25 register of the activating means 7 is maintained. The new pixels of interest which are centred on a new position of the selecting diagonal are then directed to the outputs 3 of the PAM 1.

A third possible displacement is an upward
30 displacement of the pixels of interest 17 by displacing upwardly the line 13 selected by activating means 7 and keeping the column or diagonal 15 selected by the activating means 5 unchanged. The active shift register of the activating means 7 is moved upwardly whereas the
35 active shift register of the activating means 5 is maintained. The new pixels of interest which are centred

on a new position of the selecting line 13 are then directed to the outputs 3 of the PAM 1.

The fourth possible displacement is an downward displacement of the pixels of interest 17 by displacing
5 downwardly the line 13 selected by activating means 7 and keeping the column or diagonal 15 selected by the activating means 5 unchanged. The active shift register of the activating means 7 is moved downwardly whereas the active shift register of the activating means 5 is
10 maintained. The new pixels of interest which are centred on a new position of the selecting line 13 are then directed to the outputs 3 of the PAM.

Referring now to figure 3, there is proposed a preferred embodiment of the present invention for a
15 Cartesian topology architecture where two parallel analog multiplexers or PAMs 26 and 64 are used. One PAM 26 or 64 is used for each dimension of the pixel matrix. A person skilled in the art will understand that for an application to a hexagonal topology architecture, some modifications
20 are necessary for adapting the sweeping management of the pixel matrix so that the new spatial constraints of this topology are taken into consideration. But the basic principles applied to the Cartesian topology architecture can also be applied to a hexagonal topology architecture.

25 The MAR system can be defined as a pixel matrix from which data extraction is rendered possible via parallel analog multiplexers or PAMs which are controlled by their associated shift registers. Figure 3 shows a global view of the integrated circuit of the MAR system applied to a
30 Cartesian topology architecture. The selected pixel is the one at the intersection of the selected line and column in the pixel matrix. The selection is performed by the shift registers of the activating means 18 and 60.

Referring now to figures 3 to 6, there are shown two
35 parallel analog multiplexers or PAMs 26 and 64 by which it is possible to obtain a multiport access of the sensitive

units or photoreceptors 6 of the solid state sensor 2. The solid state sensor 2 covers $N \times M$ sensitive units or pixels 6. Each sensitive unit 6 has a multiport addressing architecture with axis selection lines 16 and 58 and
5 output sensing data lines 20 and 62. The addressing and extraction architecture shown in figures 3 to 6 has two axis systems. The first PAM 26 is used for a first axis system whereas the second PAM 64 is use for the second axis system.

10 The multiple extracting data lines 36 and 72 supply output signals to an analog computing module (not shown) for computing, in real time, these output signals which are a filtered representation of the current image detected by the sensing cells or pixels of interest 42.

15 There is shown in figure 6 an example of a scanning device having six sensing cells 4. The invention can be generalized for both Cartesian or hexagonal regular tessellation. For each type of tessellation, there can be defined a multiport access photoreceptor sensor (MAR),
20 having various number of axis systems.

Thus, the present architecture gives access, simultaneously, to a set of individual analog signals which are extracted from a given area on the solid state sensor 2. The figures 3 to 6 show a two-axis system but
25 the present invention can be embodied with a plurality of axis systems.

The addressing and extracting apparatus is for addressing sensing cells of interest 42 in the solid state sensor 2, and extracting thereof resulting signals. The
30 apparatus comprises a solid state sensor 2 including a plurality of sensing cells 4. Each of the sensing cells 4 has a sensitive unit 6 for receiving a physical phenomenon and producing a resulting signal representative of an intensity of the physical phenomenon received by the
35 sensitive unit 6. In the present case, the phenomenon received is light. It has also a controllable switch 8

having a first terminal 10 for receiving the resulting signal from the sensitive unit 6, a second terminal 12 for delivering upon activation of the switch the resulting signal, and a control gate 14.

5 At least one first sensing selecting line 16 is provided. Each selecting line 16 is connected to a sensing array 17 of n of the sensitive units 6 by the control gates 14 of their associated first sensing controllable switches 8. A first sensing activating means
10 18 such as shift registers is provided for individually activating the first sensing selecting lines 16.

N sensing data lines 20 are connected respectively to the n sensitive units 6 of each array by the second terminals 12 of their associated controllable switches 8
15 so that, in operation, each of the sensing data lines 20 receives the corresponding resulting signal when one of the first sensing selecting lines 16 is activated.

A parallel analog multiplexer 26 is provided. It comprises a first bidimensional extracting array of controllable switches 24. The first bidimensional extracting
20 array has a first dimension of n columns by a second dimension of k rows. K is a positive integer representative of the amount of the sensing cells of interest 42. Each of the controllable switches 24 has a
25 first terminal 28, a second terminal 30 and a control gate 32. Each one of the n sensing data lines 20 is connected to a corresponding one of the n columns of controllable switches 24 by first terminals 28 thereof.

N first extracting selecting lines 34 are provided.
30 Each of the N first extracting selecting lines 34 is connected to the control gates 32 of a group of the controllable switches 24. The controllable switches 24 of each group form an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the first bidimensional extracting array. In the
35 present description, we use the expressions parallel, transversal, columns and rows to describe the

configuration of certain elements shown in the figures because it is easier to explain the invention with the use of these expressions but it should be understood that these elements are not necessarily in practice physically
5 positioned in columns or rows, or transversal or parallel.

First extracting data lines 36 are provided. There are k of them and are each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of controllable switches 24 by second terminals 30 thereof. An extracting activating means 38
10 such as shift registers is provided for individually activating the first extracting selecting lines 34 according to a given sequence. A controller 40 is provided for controlling and synchronizing operation of the activating means 18 and 38, whereby, upon activation of
15 the activating means 18 and 38, the sensing cells of interest 42 are addressed, and the corresponding resulting signals are extracted via the first extracting data lines 36.

Several first sensing selecting lines 16 are
20 provided. Each of the first sensing selecting lines 16 is connected to one of the first sensing arrays 17 of n sensitive units 6 by the control gates 14 of their associated controllable switches 8. The first sensing arrays 17 of sensitive units 6 are parallel. The sensing
25 activating means 18 is for individually activating the first sensing selecting lines 16 according to a given sequence. The n sensing data lines 20 are each connected to one of the n sensitive units 6 of each array 17 by the second terminals 12 of their associated controllable
30 switch 8.

Each of the sensing cells 4 further comprises a controllable switch 50 having a first terminal 52 for receiving the resulting signal from the corresponding sensitive unit 6, a second terminal 54 for delivering upon
35 activation of the switch 50 the resulting signal, and a control gate 56. Second sensing selecting lines 58 are

also provided. Each of the second sensing selecting lines 58 is connected to a second sensing array 57 of m sensitive units 6 by the control gates 56 of their associated controllable switches 50. The second sensing arrays 57 of sensitive units 6 are parallel and are also transversal to the first sensing arrays 17.

A second sensing activating means 60 such as shift registers is provided for individually activating the second sensing selecting lines 58 according to a given sequence. M sensing data lines 62 are provided and are each connected to one of the m sensitive units 6 of each second sensing array by the second terminals 54 of their associated controllable switches 50.

A parallel analog multiplexer 64 is provided. It comprises a second bidimensional extracting array of controllable switches 66. The second bidimensional extracting array has a first dimension of m columns by a second dimension of k rows. Each of the controllable switches 66 is similar to the one shown in figure 5. Each controllable switch 66 has a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate. Each one of the m sensing data lines 62 is connected to a corresponding one of the m columns of controllable switches 66 by the first terminals thereof.

M second extracting selecting lines 70 are provided. Each of the m second extracting selecting lines 70 is connected to the control gates of a group of the controllable switches 66. The controllable switches 66 of each group form an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the second bidimensional extracting array.

Second extracting data lines 72 are provided and there are k of them. Each of the second extracting data lines 72 is connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of controllable switches 66 by the second terminals thereof. A second extracting activating means 74 such as shift registers is provided for individually activating

the second extracting selecting lines 70 according to a given sequence.

Noticeably, for a simple topology like the Cartesian topology, several simplifications can be made at the level
5 of activating means. An activating means can simultaneously select one line or column in the solid state sensor and one extracting selecting line of a parallel analog multiplexer or PAM.

Referring now to figures 7 and 8, there is shown an
10 embodiment of the apparatus shown in figures 3 to 6 where simplifications are made at the level of the activating means. In this embodiment, the first and second extracting activating means 38 and 74 shown in figures 3 and 6 are respectively carried out by the second and first sensing
15 activating means 60 and 18.

The second sensing selecting lines 58 are respectively connected to the first extracting selecting lines 34 so that the selecting lines 34 and 58 are simultaneously activated by the second sensing activating
20 means 60. The first sensing selecting lines 16 are respectively connected to the second extracting selecting lines 70 so that the selecting lines 16 and 70 are simultaneously activated by the first sensing activating means 18. In the apparatus shown in figures 6 and 8, $k=2$.

25 Referring now to figures 9 and 10 there is shown another embodiment of the apparatus wherein each of the sensing cells 4 further comprising an additional controllable switch 90 having a first terminal 92 for receiving the resulting signal from the corresponding
30 sensitive unit 6, a second terminal 94 for delivering upon activation of the switch 90 the resulting signal, and a control gate 96. The apparatus further comprising third sensing selecting lines 98 each connected to a third sensing array 97 of p sensitive units 6 by the control
35 gates 96 of their associated controllable switches 90. The third sensing arrays 97 of sensitive units 6 are parallel

and are also transversal to the first and second sensing arrays of sensitive units 6.

A third sensing activating means 100 is provided for individually activating the third sensing selecting lines 98 according to a given sequence. P sensing data lines 102 are provided. Each of the P sensing data lines 102 are connected to one of the p sensitive units, 6 of each third sensing array 97 by the second terminals 94 of their associated controllable switches 90.

10 A third parallel analog multiplexer or PAM 104 is provided. It comprises a third bidimensional extracting array of controllable switches which is similar to first and second bidimensional extracting arrays shown in figures 6 and 8. The third bidimensional extracting array 15 has a first dimension of p columns by a second dimension of k rows. Each of the controllable switches of the third bidimensional extracting array has a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate. Each one of the p sensing data lines 102 are connected to a corresponding 20 one of the p columns of the controllable switches of the third bidimensional extracting array by the first terminals thereof. P third extracting selecting lines 106 each connected to the control gates of a group of the third controllable extracting switches. The third 25 controllable extracting switches of each group form an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the third bidimensional extracting array.

The parallel analog multiplexer 104 is similar to PAM 26 or 64. It comprises k third extracting data lines 108 30 each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of third controllable extracting switches by a second terminals thereof. A third extracting activating means 110 is also provided for individually activating the third extracting selecting lines 106 according to a given 35 sequence. Preferably, m, n and p are the same number.

Referring now to figure 11, there is illustrated an

algorithm of the steps performed by the controller shown in figures 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Several scanning routines are performed until the whole solid state sensor is covered. During a single scanning routine, for each PAM
5 one sensing selecting line and one extracting selecting line are activated, and the extracting data lines of each PAM are read. During the successive scanning routines at least one of the selecting lines is changed by shifting a shift register of its associated activating means.

10 Although the present invention has been explained hereinafter by way of preferred embodiments thereof, it should be pointed out that any modifications to these preferred embodiments, within the scope of the appended claims, are not deemed to change nor alter the nature and
15 scope of the present invention.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An addressing and extracting apparatus for addressing sensing cells of interest in a solid state
5 sensor, and extracting thereof resulting signals, the apparatus comprising:

a solid state sensor including a plurality of sensing cells, each of the sensing cells having:

10 a sensitive unit for receiving a physical phenomenon and producing a resulting signal representative of an intensity of the physical phenomenon received by the sensitive unit; and

15 a first sensing controllable switch having a first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the switch the resulting signal, and a control gate;

a first selecting line connected to a first sensing array of n sensitive units by the control gates of their
20 associated first sensing controllable switches;

a first sensing activating means for activating the first selecting line;

25 n sensing data lines connected respectively to the n sensitive units of the first array by the second terminals of their associated first sensing controllable switches so that, in operation, each of the sensing data lines receives the corresponding resulting signal when the first selecting line is activated;

30 a first parallel analog multiplexer comprising:
a first bidimensional extracting array of first controllable extracting switches, having a first dimension of n columns by a second dimension of k rows, k being a positive integer representative of the amount of the sensing cells of interest, each of the first controllable
35 extracting switches having a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate, each one of the n sensing

data lines being connected to a corresponding one of the n columns of first controllable extracting switches by first terminals thereof;

n first extracting selecting lines each
5 connected to the control gates of a group of the first controllable extracting switches, the first controllable extracting switches of each group forming an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the first bidimensional extracting array; and

10 k first extracting data lines each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of first controllable extracting switches by second terminals thereof;

a first extracting activating means for individually activating the first extracting selecting lines, according
15 to a given sequence; and

a controller for controlling and synchronizing operation of the activating means, whereby, upon activation of the activating means, the sensing cells of interest are addressed, and the corresponding resulting
20 signals are extracted via the first extracting data lines.

2. Apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising additional first selecting lines each connected to an additional first sensing array of n of the sensitive units
25 by the control gates of their associated first sensing controllable switches, the first sensing arrays of sensitive units being parallel; and
wherein:

the first sensing activating means is for
30 individually activating the first selecting lines according to a given sequence; and

the n sensing data lines are each connected to one of the n sensitive units of each array by the second terminals of their associated first sensing controllable
35 switches.

3. Apparatus according to claim 2, wherein each of the sensing cells further comprising a second sensing controllable switch having a first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the corresponding sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the second sensing switch the resulting signal, and a control gate, the apparatus further comprising:

second sensing selecting lines each connected to a second sensing array of m sensitive units by the control gates of their associated second sensing controllable switches, the second sensing arrays of sensitive units being parallel and being also transversal to the first sensing arrays;

a second sensing activating means for individually activating the second sensing selecting lines according to a given sequence;

m sensing data lines each connected to one of the m sensitive units of each second sensing array by the second terminals of their associated second sensing controllable switches;

a second parallel analog multiplexer comprising:

a second bidimensional extracting array of second controllable extracting switches, having a first dimension of m columns by a second dimension of k rows, each of the second controllable extracting switches having a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate, each one of the m sensing data lines being connected to a corresponding one of the m columns of second controllable extracting switches by first terminals thereof;

m second extracting selecting lines each connected to the control gates of a group of the second controllable extracting switches, the second controllable extracting switches of each group forming an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the second bidimensional extracting array; and

k second extracting data lines each connected to

a corresponding one of the k rows of second controllable extracting switches by second terminals thereof; and

a second extracting activating means for individually activating the second extracting selecting lines according to a given sequence.

4. Apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the first sensing arrays are perpendicular to the second sensing arrays.

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5. Apparatus according to claim 4, wherein:

the first extracting activating means is carried out by second sensing activating means with the second sensing selecting lines, the second sensing selecting lines being respectively connected to the first extracting selecting lines so that the second sensing selecting lines and the first extracting selecting lines are simultaneously activated by the second sensing activating means; and

20 the second extracting activating means is carried out by the first sensing activating means with the first sensing selecting lines, the first sensing selecting lines being respectively connected to the second extracting selecting lines so that the first sensing selecting lines and the second extracting selecting lines are simultaneously activated by the first sensing activating means.

6. Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein $k=2$.

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7. Apparatus according to claim 3, wherein each of the sensing cells further comprising a third sensing controllable switch having a first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the corresponding sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the third sensing controllable switch the resulting

35

signal, and a control gate, the apparatus further comprising:

third sensing selecting lines each connected to a third sensing array of p sensitive units by the control
5 gates of their associated third sensing controllable switches, the third sensing arrays of sensitive units being parallel and being also transversal to the first and second sensing arrays;

a third sensing activating means for individually
10 activating the third sensing selecting lines according to a given sequence;

p sensing data lines each connected to one of the p sensitive units of each third sensing array by the second
15 terminals of their associated third sensing controllable switches;

a third parallel analog multiplexer comprising:

a third bidimensional extracting array of third controllable extracting switches, having a first dimension of p columns by a second dimension of k rows, each of the
20 third controllable extracting switches having a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate, each one of the p sensing data lines being connected to a corresponding one of the p columns of third controllable extracting switches by the first terminals thereof;

25 p third extracting selecting lines each connected to the control gates of a group of the third controllable extracting switches, the third controllable extracting switches of each group forming an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the third
30 bidimensional extracting array; and

k third extracting data lines each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of third controllable extracting switches by second terminals thereof; and

a third extracting activating means for individually
35 activating the third extracting selecting lines according to a given sequence.

8. apparatus according to claim 7, wherein m, n and p are the same number.

9. A method for addressing sensing cells of interest
5 in a solid state sensor, and extracting thereof resulting signals, the method comprising steps of:

(a) receiving a physical phenomenon by means of a solid state sensor including a plurality of sensing cells, each of the sensing cells having:

10 a sensitive unit for receiving a physical phenomenon and producing a resulting signal representative of an intensity of the physical phenomenon received by the sensitive unit; and

a first sensing controllable switch having a
15 first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the switch the resulting signal, and a control gate;

(b) providing a first selecting line connected to a
20 first sensing array of n of the sensitive units by the control gates of their associated first sensing controllable switches;

(c) activating the first selecting line;

(d) providing n sensing data lines connected
25 respectively to the n sensitive units of the array by the second terminals of their associated first sensing controllable switches so that, in operation, each of the sensing data lines receives the corresponding resulting signal when the first selecting line is activated;

30 (e) providing a first parallel analog multiplexer comprising:

a first bidimensional extracting array of first controllable extracting switches, having a first dimension of n columns by a second dimension of k rows, k being a
35 positive integer representative of the amount of the sensing cells of interest, each of the first controllable

extracting switches having a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate, each one of the n sensing data lines being connected to a corresponding one of the n columns of first controllable extracting switches by first terminals thereof;

n first extracting selecting lines each connected to the control gates of a group of the first controllable extracting switches, the first controllable extracting switches of each group forming an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the first bidimensional extracting array; and

k first extracting data lines each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of first controllable extracting switches by second terminals thereof;

(f) individually activating the first extracting selecting lines according to a given sequence; and

(g) controlling and synchronizing operation of steps (c) and (f), whereby, upon activation of steps (c) and (f), the sensing cells of interest are addressed, and the corresponding resulting signals are extracted via the first extracting data lines.

10. Method according to claim 9, further comprising a step of (h) providing additional first selecting lines each connected to an additional first sensing array of n of the sensitive units by the control gates of their associated first sensing controllable switches, the first sensing arrays of sensitive units being parallel; and wherein:

steps (c) further comprises a step of individually activating the first selecting lines according to a given sequence; and

in step (d), the n sensing data lines are each connected to one of the n sensitive units of each array by the second terminals of their associated first sensing controllable switches.

11. Method according to claim 10, wherein, in step (a), each of the sensing cells further comprising a second sensing controllable switch having a first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the corresponding sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the second sensing switch the resulting signal, and a control gate, the method further comprising steps of:

5 (j) providing second sensing selecting lines each connected to a second sensing array of m of the sensitive units by the control gates of their associated second sensing controllable switches, the second sensing arrays of sensitive units being parallel and being also transversal to the first sensing arrays;

10 (k) individually activating the second sensing selecting lines according to a given sequence;

(l) providing m sensing data lines each connected to one of the m sensitive units of each second sensing array by the second terminals of their associated second sensing controllable switches;

20 (m) providing a second parallel analog multiplexer comprising:

a second bidimensional extracting array of second controllable extracting switches, having a first dimension of m columns by a second dimension of k rows, each of the second controllable extracting switches having a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate, each one of the m sensing data lines being connected to a corresponding one of the m columns of second controllable extracting switches by first terminals thereof;

30 m second extracting selecting lines each connected to the control gates of a group of the second controllable extracting switches, the second controllable extracting switches of each group forming an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the second bidimensional extracting array; and

k second extracting data lines each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of second controllable extracting switches by second terminals thereof; and

(n) individually activating the second extracting selecting lines according to a given sequence; and
5 wherein step (g) further comprises controlling and synchronizing operation of steps (k) and (n).

12. Method according to claim 11, wherein:

10 step (f) is carried out by means of step (k), the second sensing selecting lines being respectively connected to the first extracting selecting lines so that the second sensing selecting lines and the first extracting selecting lines are simultaneously activated by
15 means of step (k); and

step (n) is carried out by means of step (c), the first sensing selecting lines being respectively connected to the second extracting selecting lines so that the first sensing selecting lines and the second extracting
20 selecting lines are simultaneously activated by means of step (c).

13. Method according to claim 11, wherein, in step (a), each of the sensing cells further comprising a third
25 sensing controllable switch having a first terminal for receiving the resulting signal from the corresponding sensitive unit, a second terminal for delivering upon activation of the third sensing controllable switch the resulting signal, and a control gate, the method further
30 comprising steps of:

(o) providing third sensing selecting lines each connected to a third sensing array of p of the sensitive units by the control gates of their associated third sensing controllable switches, the third sensing arrays of
35 sensitive units being parallel and being also transversal to the first and second sensing arrays;

(p) individually activating the third sensing selecting lines according to a given sequence;

(q) providing p sensing data lines each connected to one of the p sensitive units of each third sensing array
5 by the second terminals of their associated third sensing controllable switches;

(r) providing a third parallel analog multiplexer comprising:

a third bidimensional extracting array of third
10 controllable extracting switches, having a first dimension of p columns by a second dimension of k rows, each of the third controllable extracting switches having a first terminal, a second terminal and a control gate, each one of the p sensing data lines being connected to a
15 corresponding one of the p columns of third controllable extracting switches by the first terminals thereof;

p third extracting selecting lines each connected to the control gates of a group of the third controllable extracting switches, the third controllable
20 extracting switches of each group forming an axis transversal to the columns and rows of the third bidimensional extracting array; and

k third extracting data lines each connected to a corresponding one of the k rows of third controllable
25 extracting switches by second terminals thereof;

(s) individually activating the third extracting selecting lines according to a given sequence; and wherein step (g) further comprises controlling and synchronizing operation of steps (p) and (s).

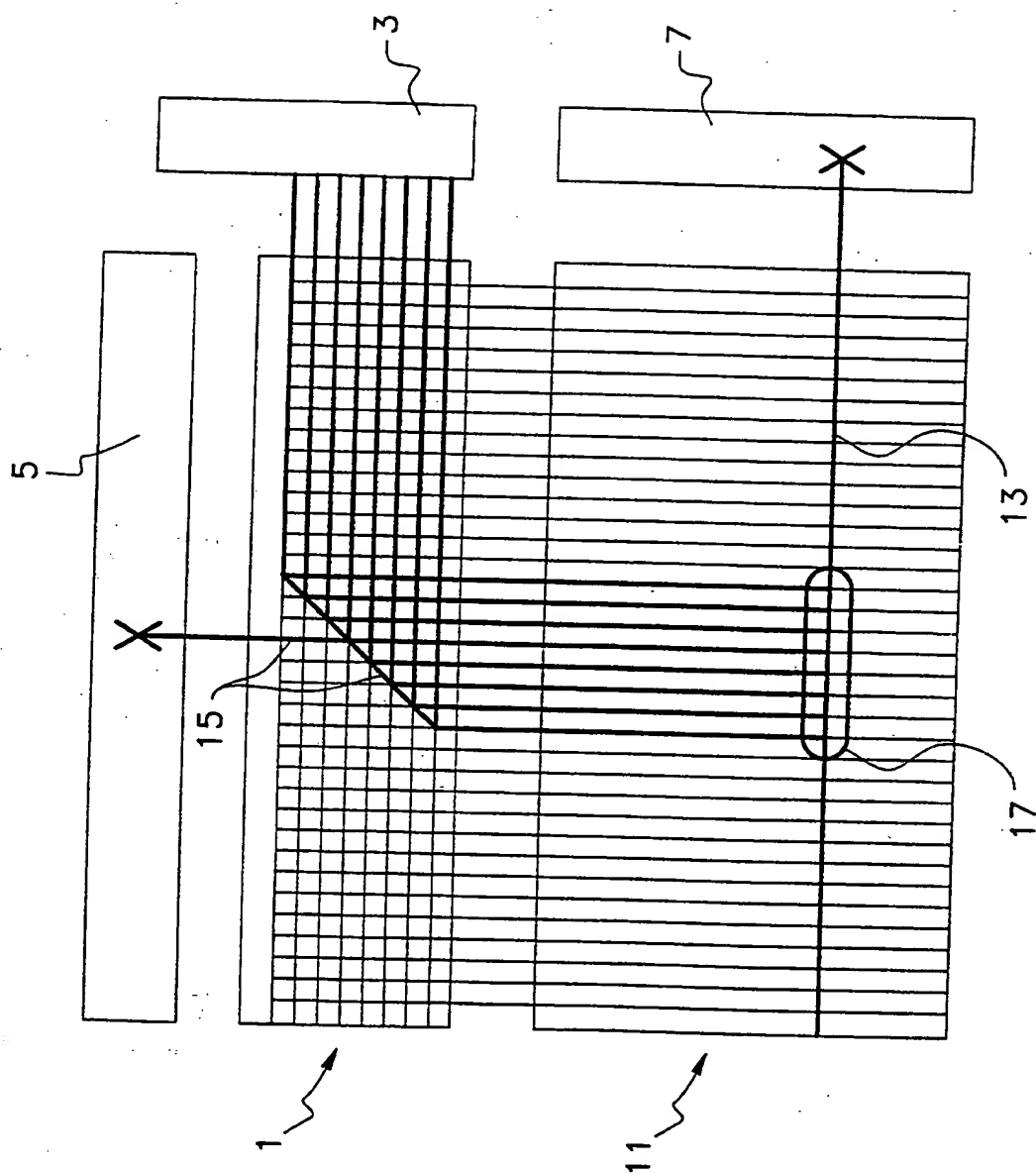


FIG. 1

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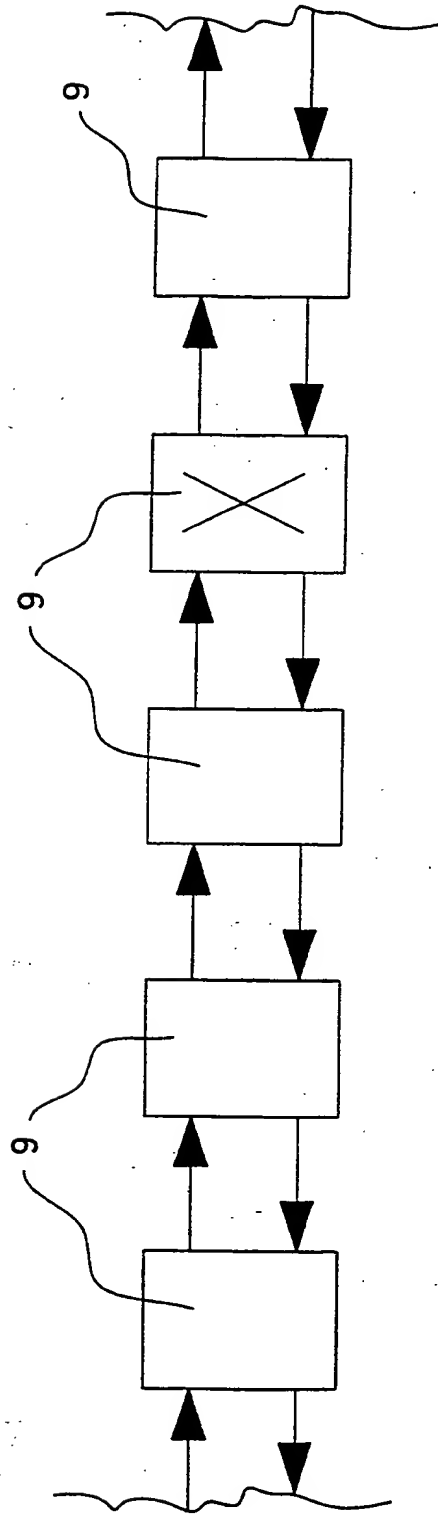
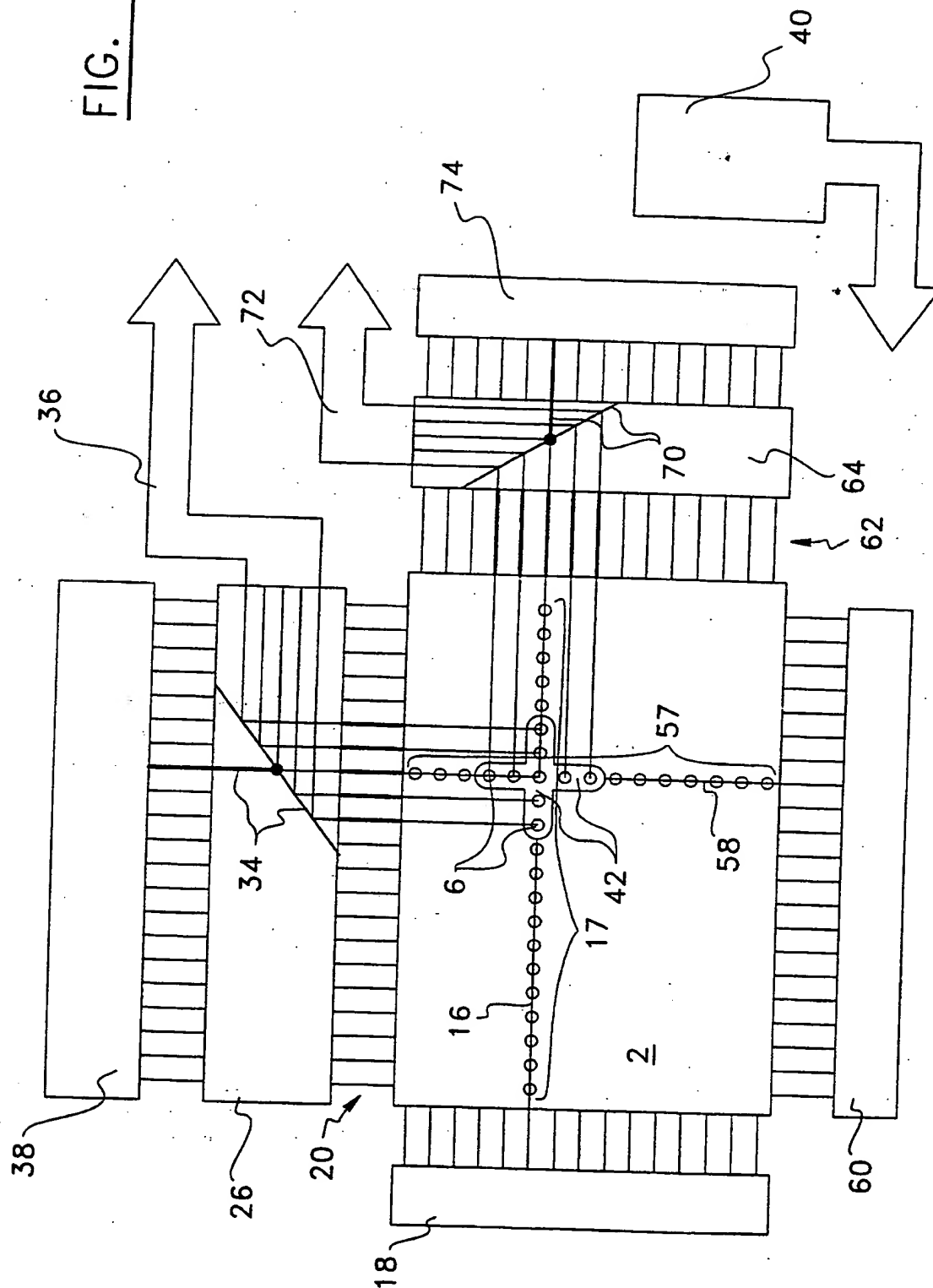


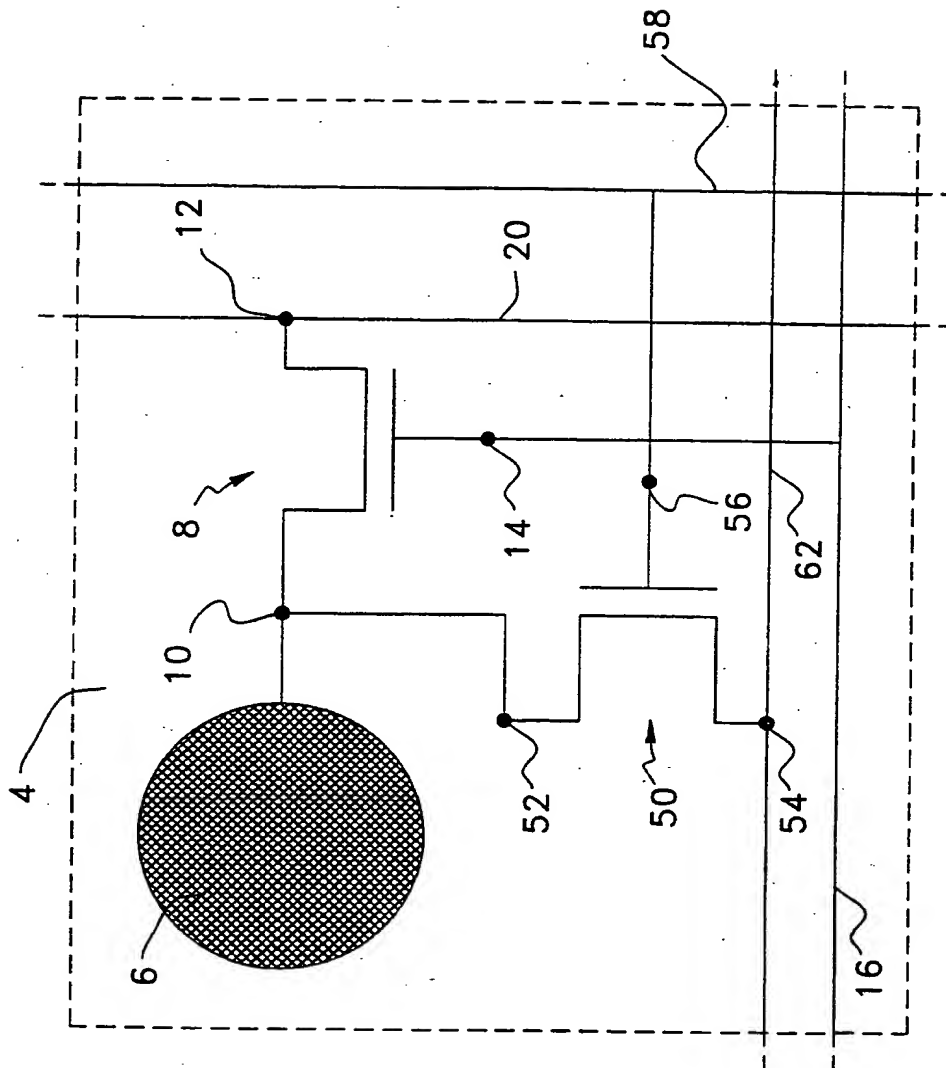
FIG. 2

FIG. 3



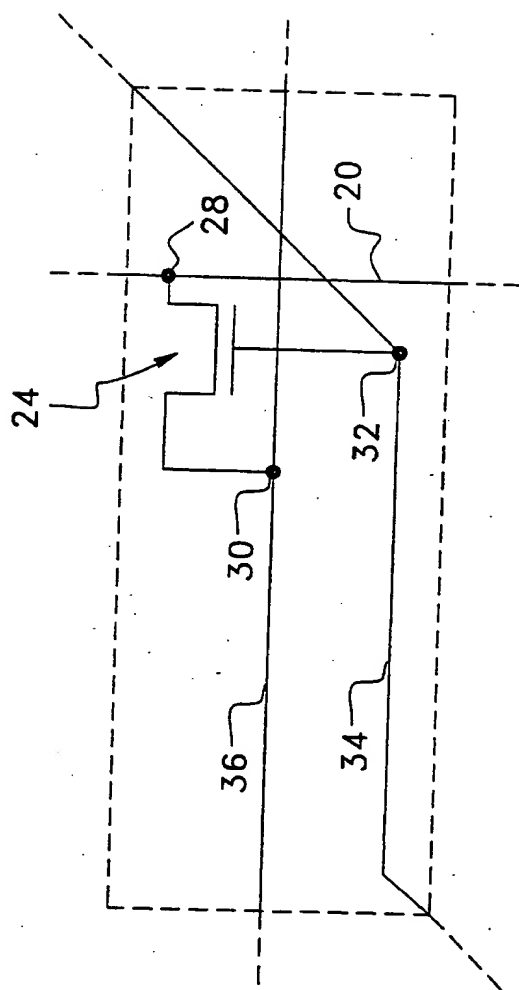
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FIG. 4



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FIG. 5



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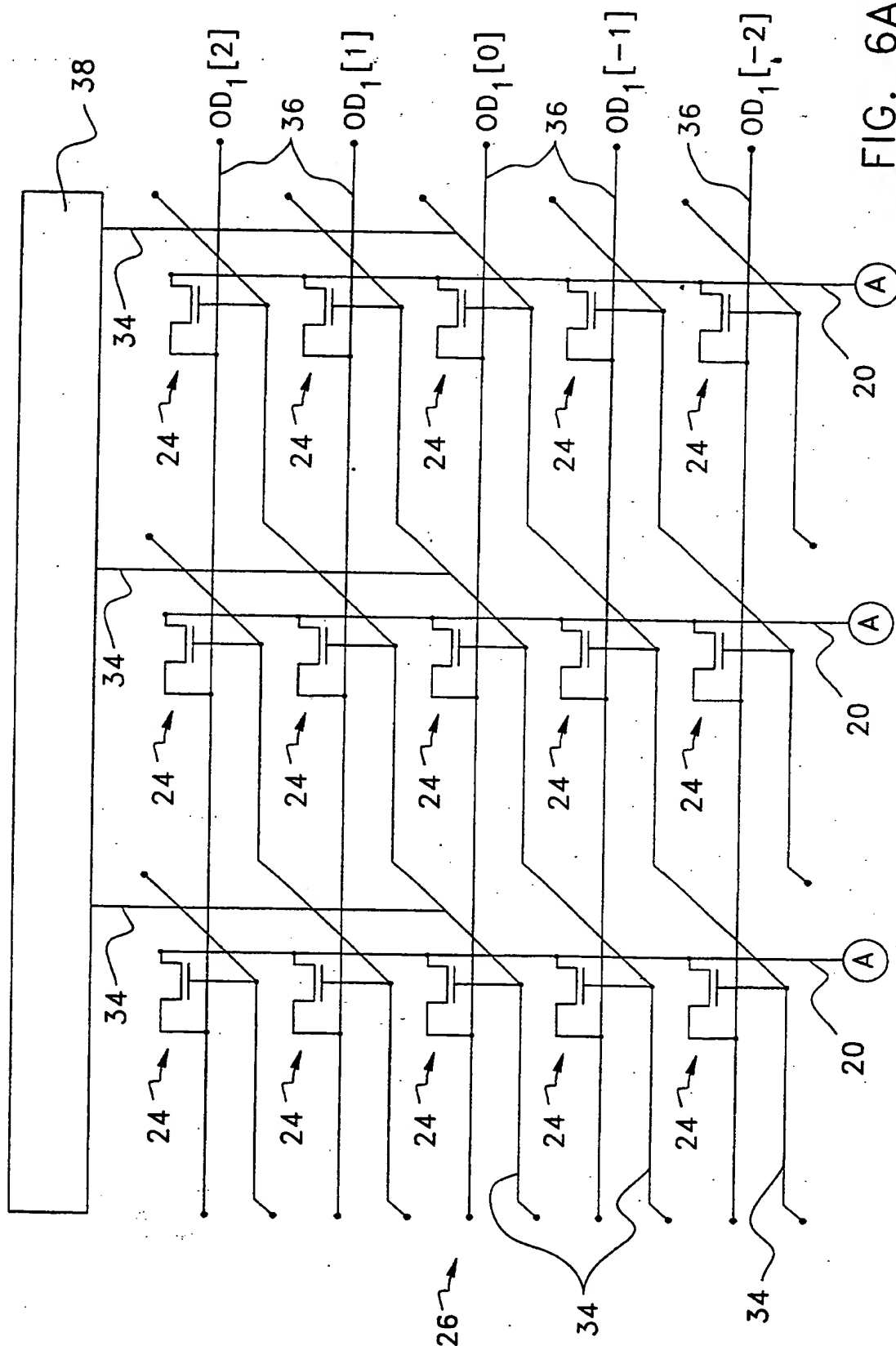
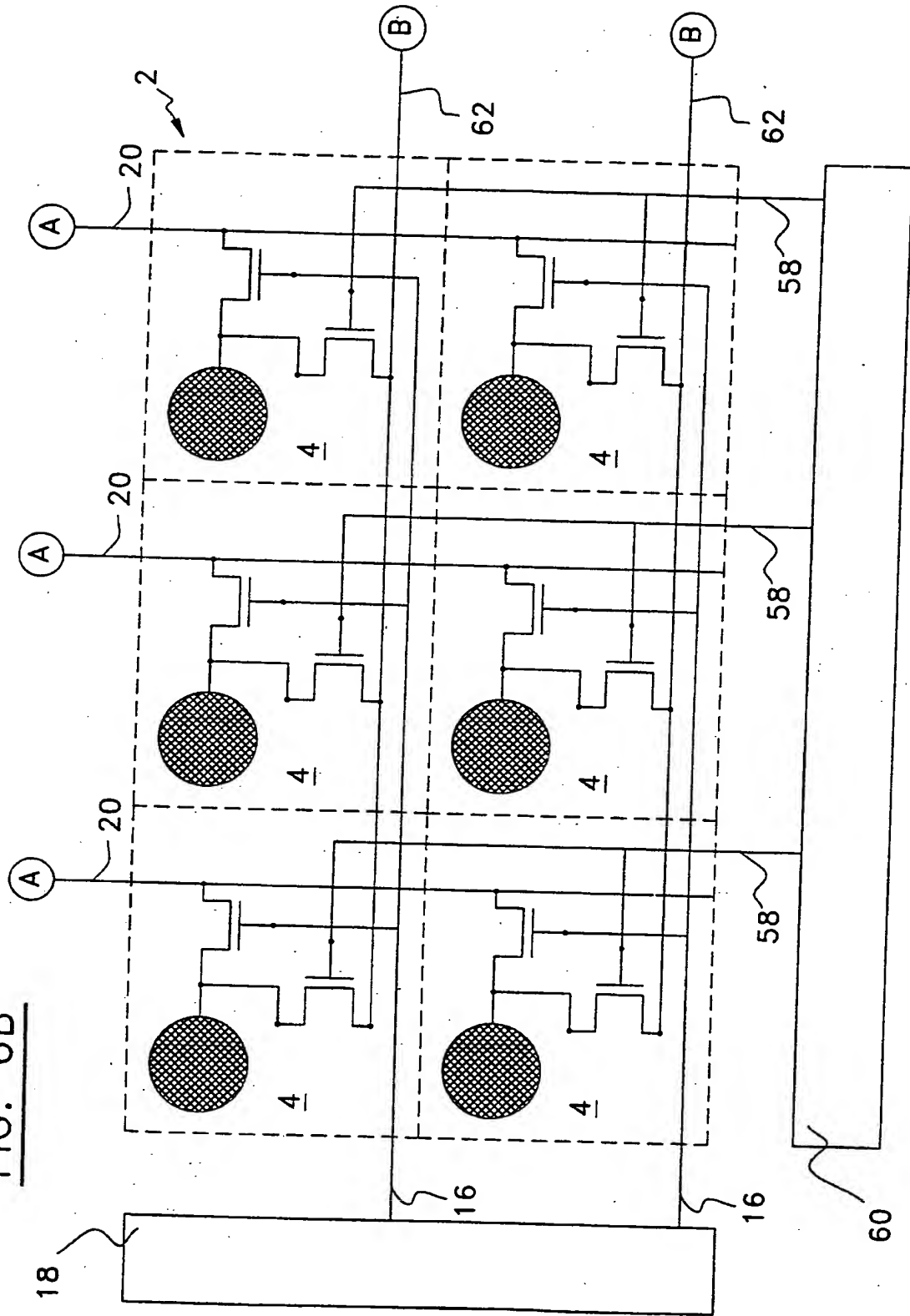


FIG. 6A

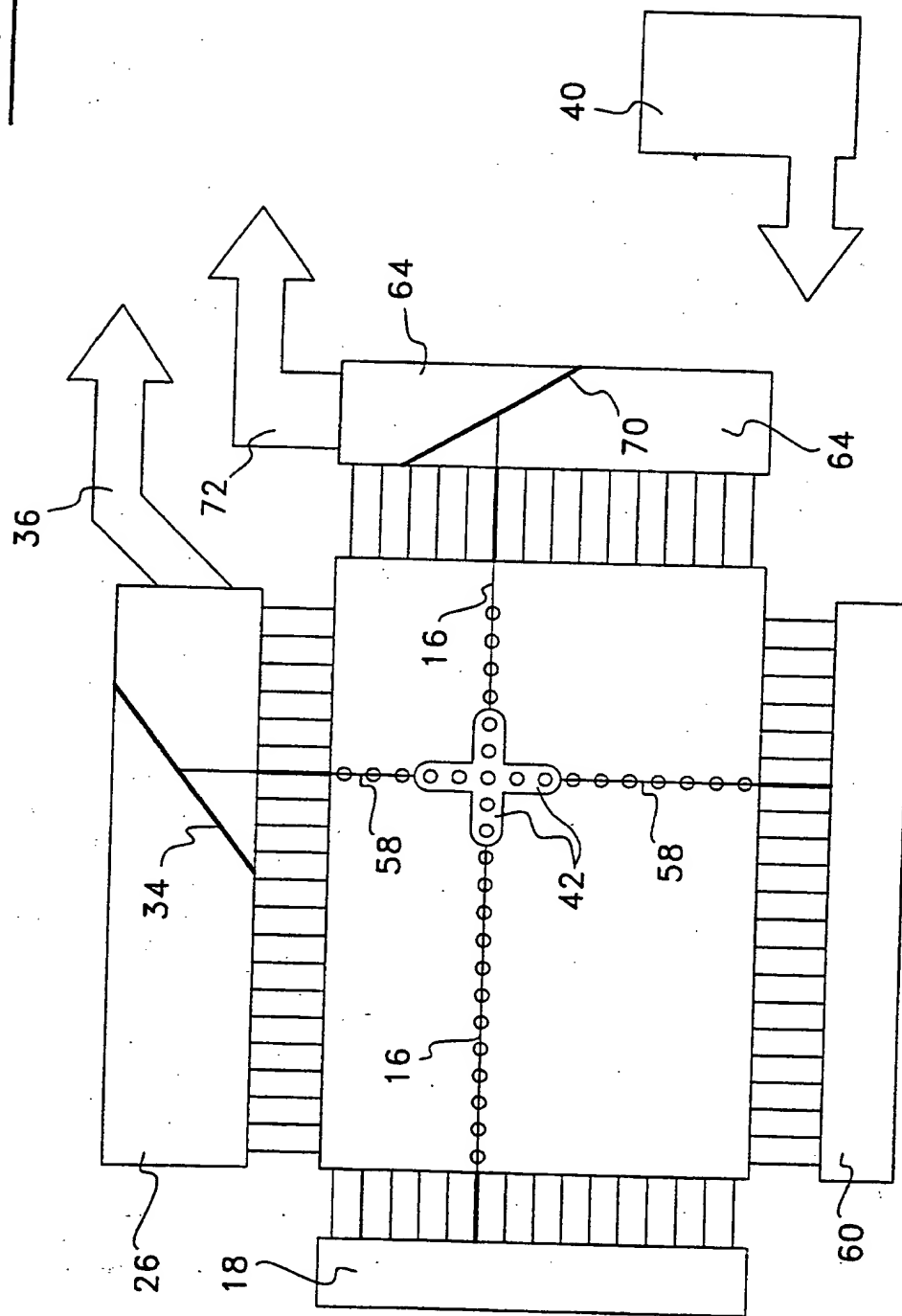
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FIG. 6B



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FIG. 7



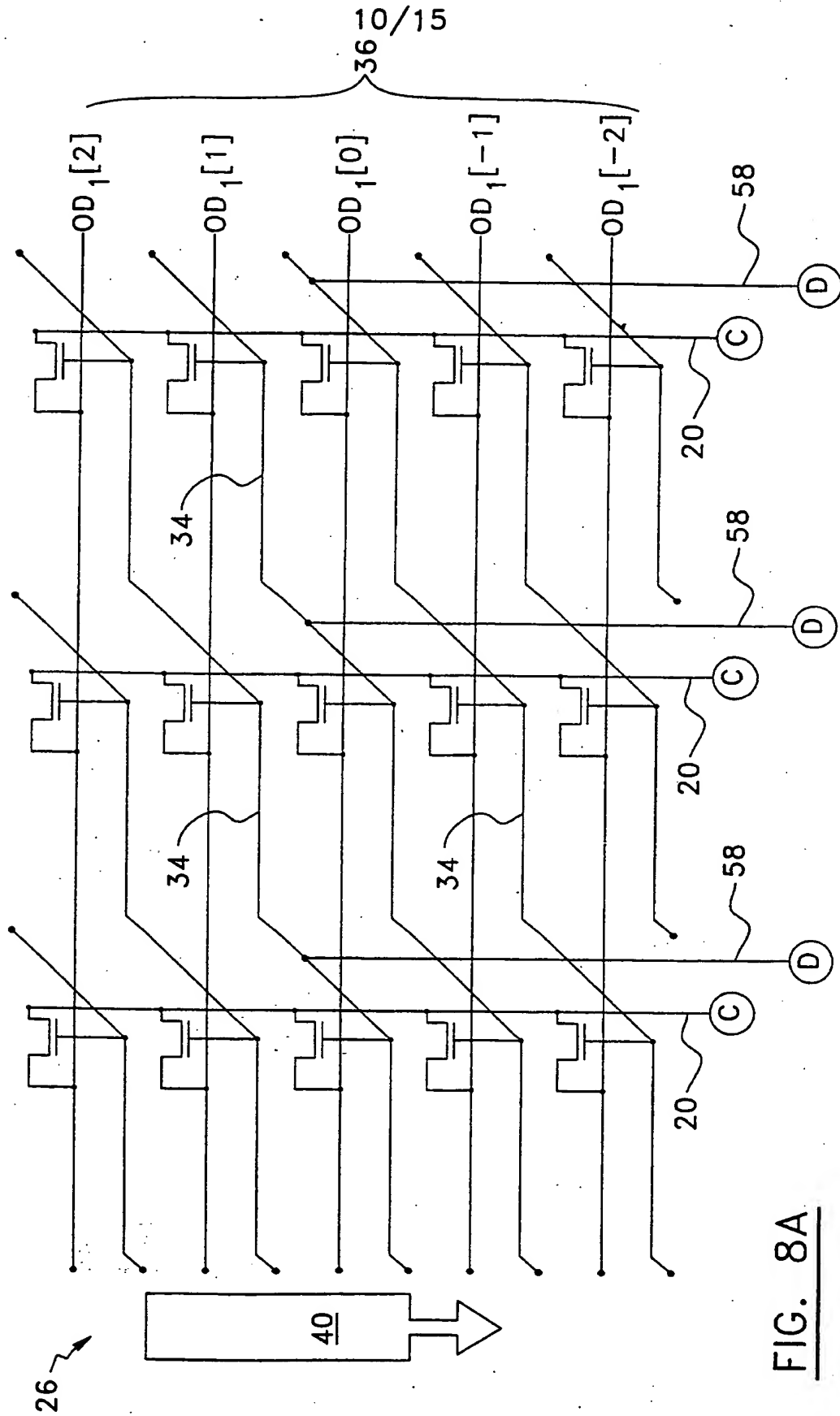
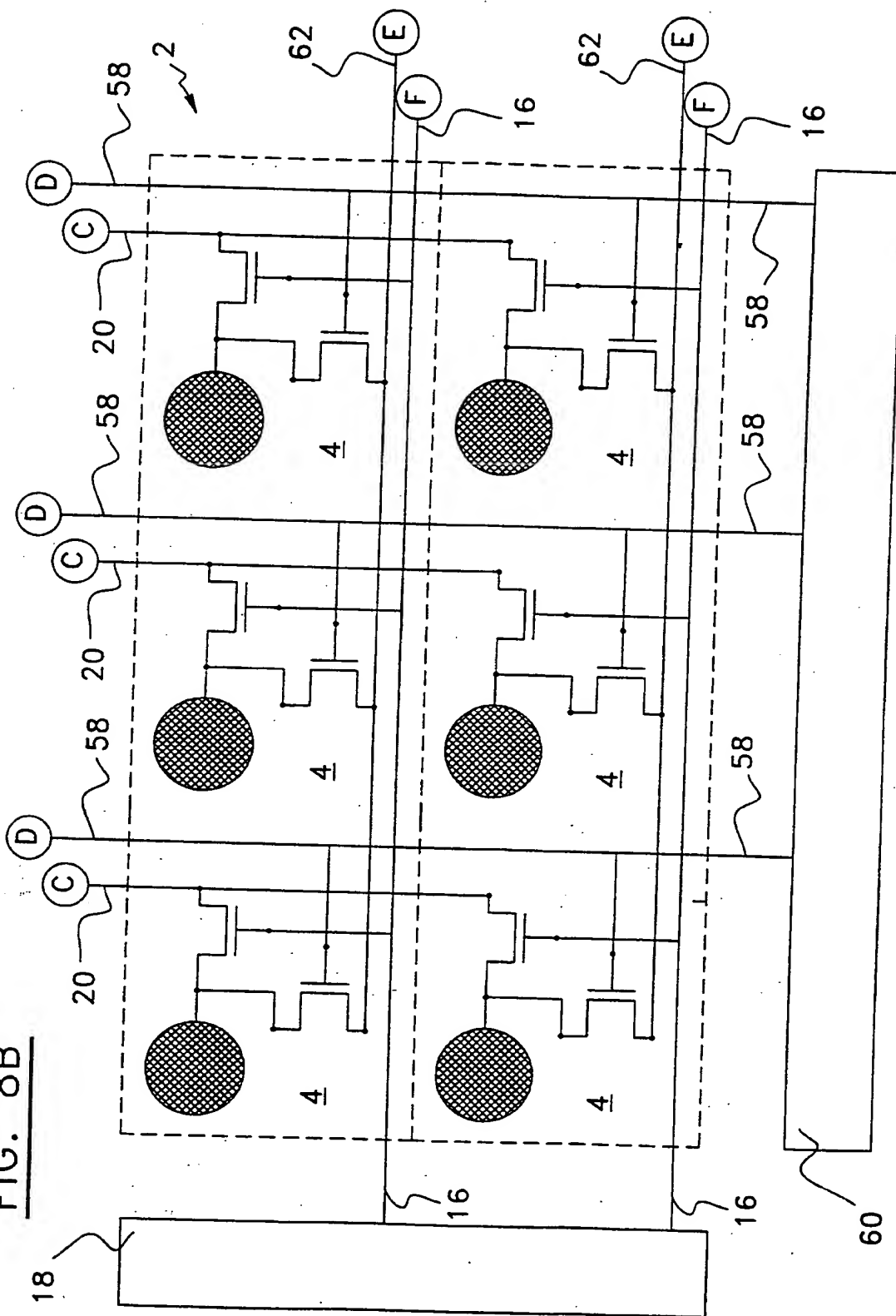


FIG. 8A

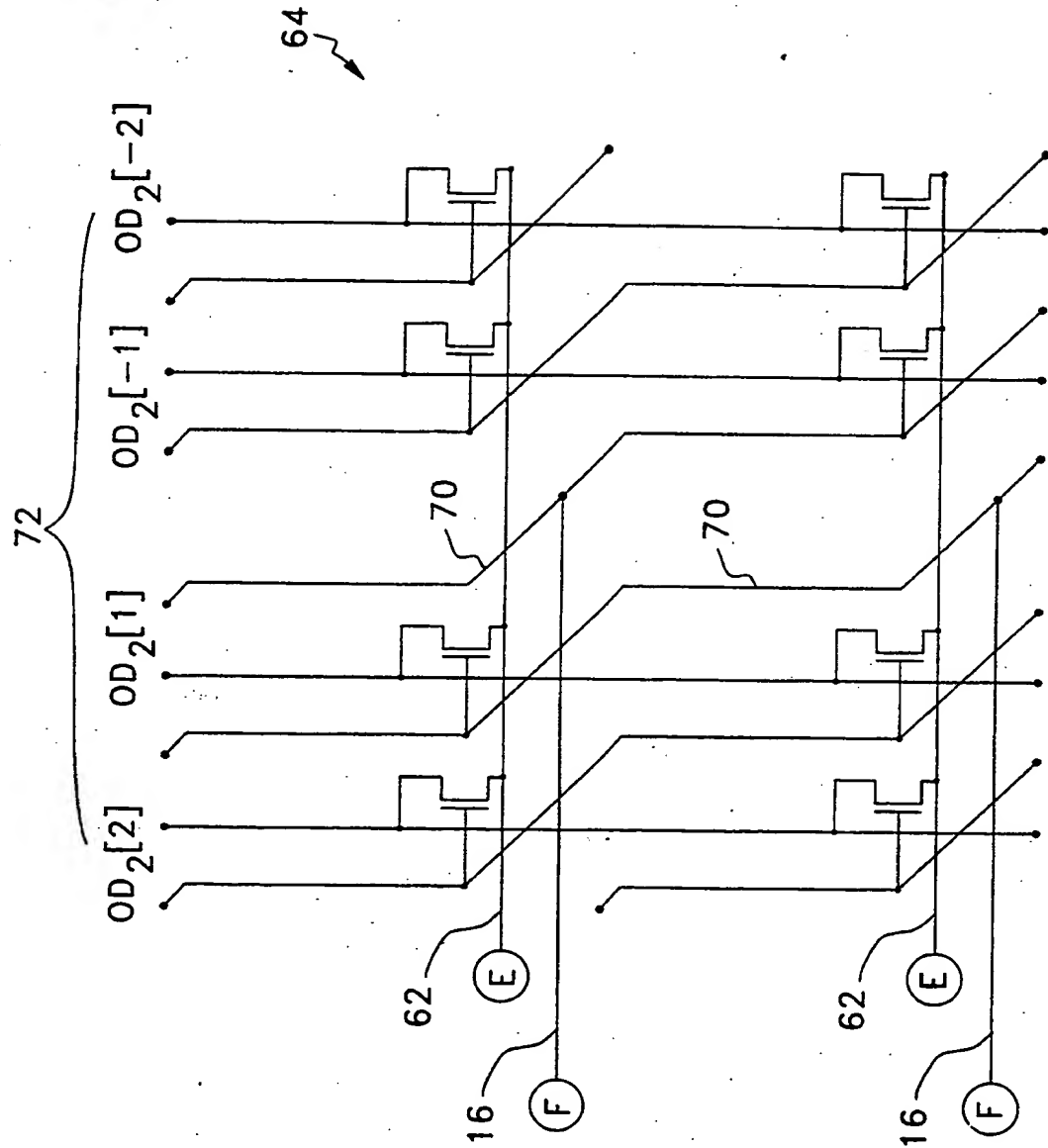
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FIG. 8B



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FIG. 8C



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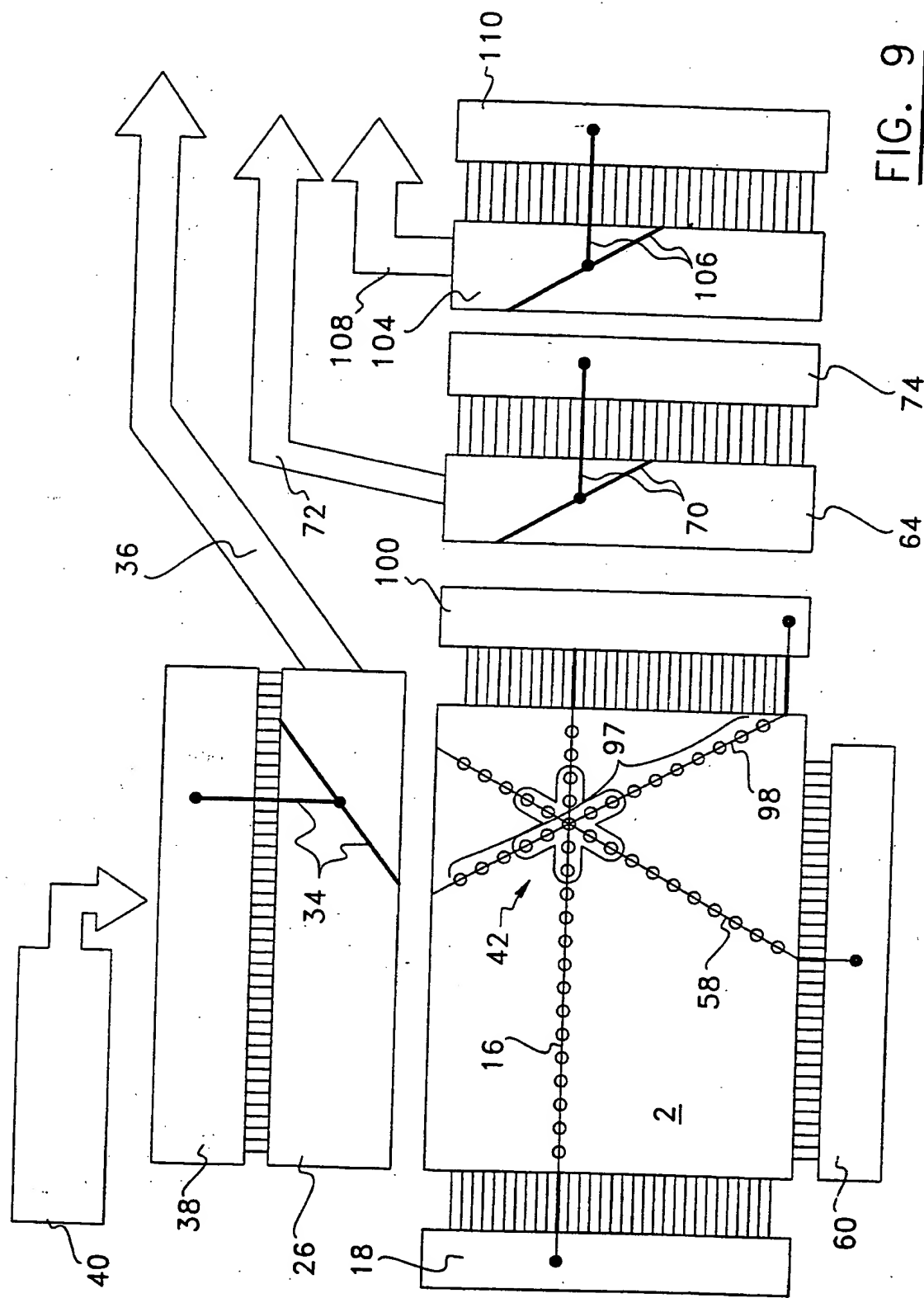
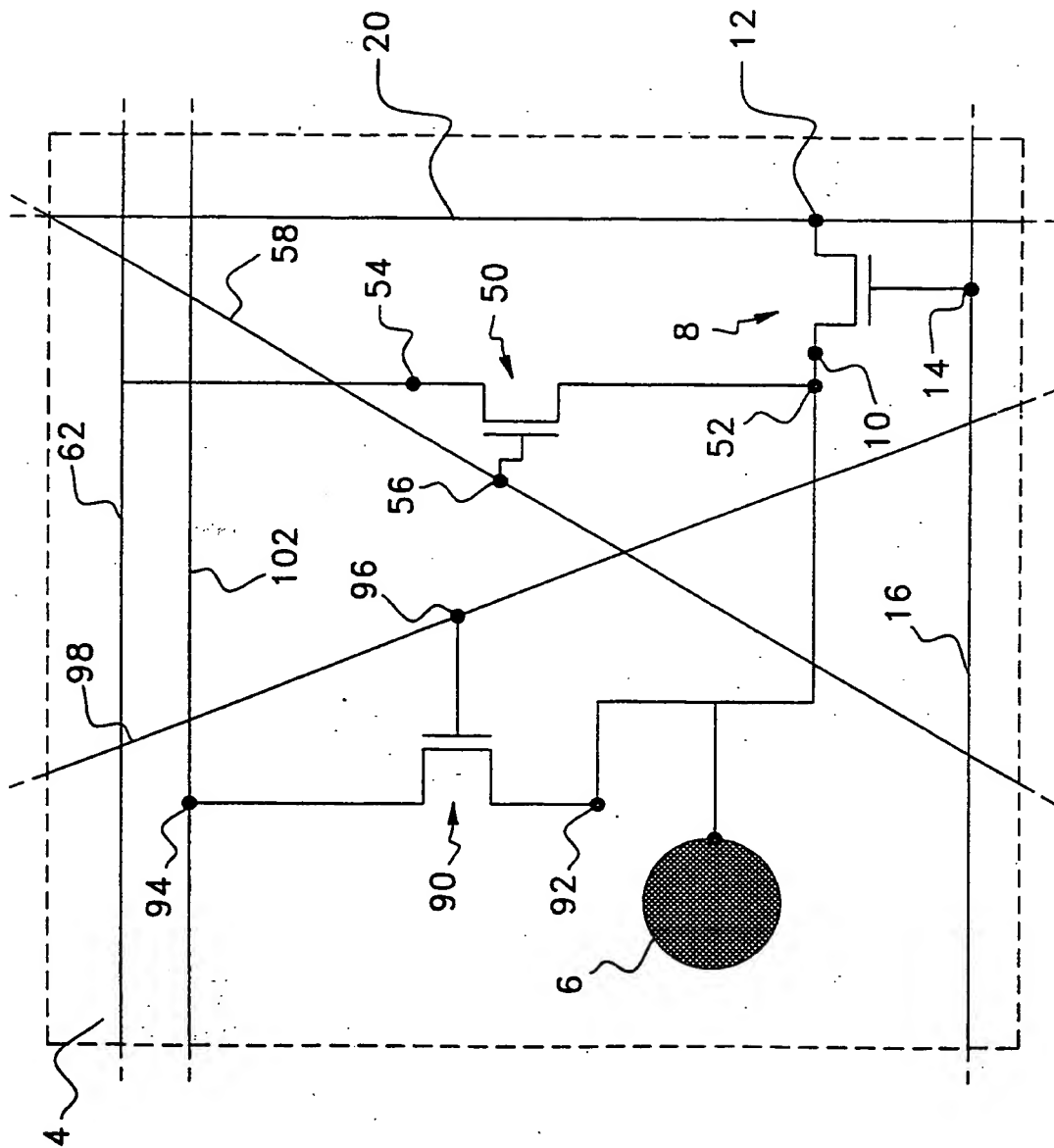
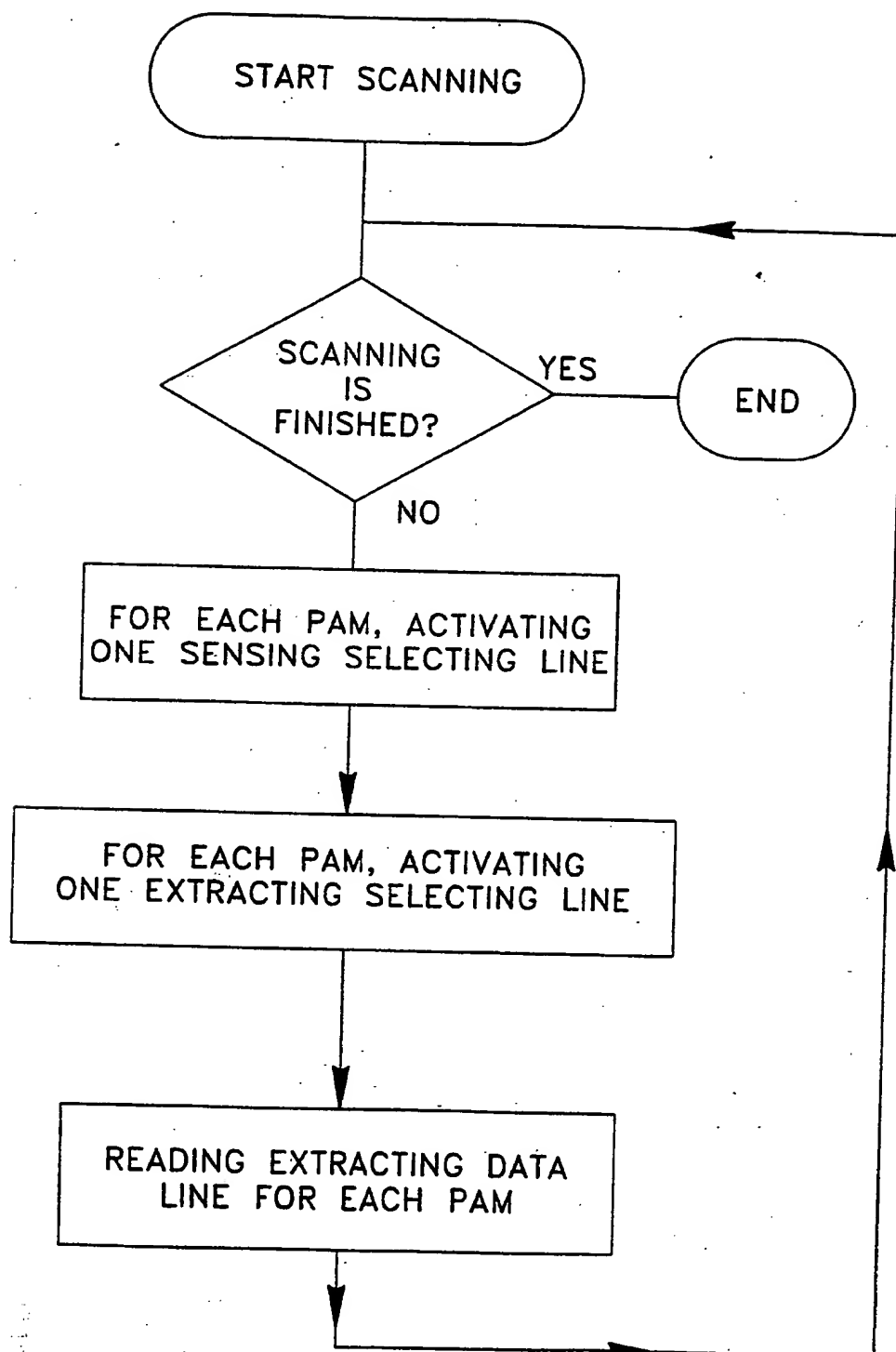


FIG. 10



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FIG. 11

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int. Application No.
PCT/CA 96/00515

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 H04N3/15

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 6 H04N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US,A,3 934 261 (SEQUIN CARLO HEINRICH) 20 January 1976 see column 2, line 37 - column 3, line 44 see figure 1 see claim 1	1-4,9-11
A	--- -/--	6,8

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

4 November 1996

Date of mailing of the international search report

- 4. 12. 96

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Dippel, U

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/CA 96/00515

C(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	<p>ROBOTICS AND AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS, vol. 11, no. 3/04, 1 December 1993, AMSTERDAM, NL, pages 231-242, XP000414330 TREMBLAY M ET AL: "HIGH RESOLUTION SMART IMAGE SENSOR WITH INTEGRATED PARALLEL ANALOG PROCESSING FOR MULTIREOLUTION EDGE EXTRACTION" cited in the application see page 233, left-hand column, paragraph 2 see page 233, right-hand column, last paragraph - page 234, right-hand column, paragraph 1 see figure 2</p>	1-4,9-11
A		5-7,12, 13
A	<p>US,A,4 786 818 (MEAD CARVER A ET AL) 22 November 1988 see column 10, line 42 - column 11, line 12 see figure 12</p>	1-13

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/CA 96/00515

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US-A-4786818	22-11-88	NONE	